



# Katy

from Milton  
to  
Japan

*"A Dream Come True"*

こんにちは (konnichiwa)

Hi my name is Katy and right now I am a Rotary youth exchange student in Japan. It's hard to believe that I am over halfway through the exchange and writing my second BeaverTale. Over the past few months I have been given many opportunities to explore and experience many different things here in Japan and I can't wait to share some of them with you.



My last BeaverTale was written in the middle of November so here is what has been happening since. At the end of November I moved to my second host family, I was placed in a family where I had my Host parents and three younger host sisters, Aika age 9, Sayaka age 11, and Nanaka age 15. The oldest of the girls is in the grade below me in school and part of our school's cheer leading team. It was nice because we would go to school together and sometimes see each other at school. They were all so welcoming and fun to be with.

At the beginning of December I was able to go on a three day two night school trip to Tokyo. On December sixth we took the three hour shinkansen (bullet train) from Toyama to Tokyo where we immediately loaded on to tour buses that were to take us on the tours we signed up for. The tour that I chose to go on took me to The Tokyo courthouse, the Imperial Palace, and the government buildings. We then went back to the hotel to settle in and get our stuff organized. I was rooming with two of my classmates. That night we were able to go to dinner in student groups in the area around the hotel. Once we were back in the hotel room my roommates and I played cards and talked, it was a really fun way to get to know my classmates.

The next morning was an early morning; after breakfast we were able to go out in already made student groups to designated area's in the city. My group went to Harajuku where we were able to do some shopping before we headed off to the Meiji jingu shrine where we had to check in with our teacher before doing a little more exploring in the area. At the beginning of the afternoon we were able to make our way to Tokyo Disney, my friends and I went to Tokyo Disney Sea and went on some rides and did some shopping, it was a really fun day spent with my friends where we were able to have fun and really enjoy ourselves. Our third and final day we went to Waseda University for a workshop and a tour of the university. It was so my classmates could start to think about University and Waseda University is right in the heart of Tokyo and one of the largest universities it was also a really cool opportunity for me to see how big their international program was. As a class we were able to go to Asakusa Sansoji temple to tour around and see some of the history in Tokyo. As our final adventure of our trip we boarded a boat tour down the river in Tokyo. We then headed back to Toyama on the shinkansen, where I was able to meet back up with my host family and go out for dinner with them and tell them about my trip.

Part way through December I celebrated my eighteenth birthday. My rotary club sang me happy birthday and gave me a cake on the night before at the meeting we had. The day of my Birthday my classmates planned a surprise party for me during our English class where we had snacks and talked and had a fun time before they showed me a video they made. My class went to my ALT (assistant language teacher) and asked him to contact my family and friends to see if they could send in videos wishing me a happy birthday, they even included some videos themselves and it was very sweet. It was a really fun birthday and something I will never forget thanks to my classmates and teachers.

A few weeks later we started our Winter vacation. It started with the closing ceremony for the semester, where we cheered on our soccer team, rugby team, and both male and female volleyball teams because they were all going to nationals over the winter break. It then concluded with the principal going over the rules for the break and wishing us all a great break. Most of the students had to go back to school for the first few days of breaks for studying or club activities. I was then able to celebrate Christmas with my host family, a few days before we went to a Christmas party with my host families friends.

On Christmas both my host parents had to work and my oldest host sister had cheer leading it because in Japan Christmas is not a very celebrated holiday it is more for friends and people in relationships. It made for a very relaxed day with my two youngest host sisters. That night we celebrated with a nice dinner and Christmas cake, it made for a nice relaxed Christmas. The next few days were very relaxed and spent with my host family. New Year is an extremely big holiday here. For the countdown my host family and I spent it with their friends. But on January first we spent the morning just my host family and I, for lunch we went to my host Dad's mother's house where we had traditional Japanese New Year's foods like beans, octopus, fish, mochi (rice cake) and vegetables. With the entire family we then went to a Shrine to pray for health, happiness and a great new year, we went and prayed before getting fortunes for the new year. I then purchased a charm called a omamori. They have them for a lot of things from health, to school to driving. I purchased one for myself and then my host dad purchased a health one as a gift to my family, it was really nice of him. For dinner that night we went to my host mom's mother's house where we had the same foods as we had at lunch, we then headed next door to my host mom's aunt's house where we wished all of their family a happy New Year and had dessert before heading home. It was a long day but a lot of fun to celebrate the New Year in such a beautiful country and with a great host family.

Before school started back up I got the opportunity to go skiing a few times, once with my host dad and youngest host sister and once with a friend from school. I had an amazing time both times, there were great conditions and amazing views to top it all off. In my city there are three separate ski hills all within the same area. I was able to experience two separate ones and even go down some of the highest hills, it truly was a dream come true to go skiing in Japan.

Closer to the end of winter vacation we said goodbye to the two Australian students that were here, they had both been so helpful in showing us around the city and they both became very good friends of mine.

The first day back to school was only a half day because the students all had tests to see how much they studied over the break so I was able to go home early and spend most of the day with my host mom. Then we got back into the routine of being back to school. There are definitely some differences from schooling in Canada than in Japan and it is really cool to actually be able to experience the differences, for instance schools don't have janitors; students clean the classrooms. On Mondays and Fridays we are at school from eight thirty in the morning to three thirty in the afternoon, but for the other three days of the week we go to school from eight thirty to four thirty. For gym class the girls do jump rope through the winter seasons as there isn't a lot of gymnasium space. My school is a private school so we are slightly different from some of the other schools in the areas so it is sometimes interesting to hear from the other exchange students what subtle differences there are even between each school, like my school each grade is designated a colour, and that is the colour you have for the three years of high school.

At the end of January I moved to my third host family, this host family is just my host parents as my host brother lives in Kyoto for university and my host sister works in Tokyo, it is always interesting moving host families because each family is different in the way their routine works, like for this house my host mom drives me to and from school every day because there is only one bus that goes through our area and it doesn't come very often. The first week I was with them I had a few days off of school due to an event that my school was hosting, that gave me the opportunity to spend time and get to know my Host family.

At the beginning of February I was able to go to Takayama with my host family, it is a very old Japanese town that has a lot of shops and traditional Japanese housing, including one of the last standing government buildings from the Edo period. It was holds some really cool history and some stunning views of the mountains. My host family also took me to a snow and soba festival in Toga city in the mountains where we were able to see some amazing snow sculptures and sights of the mountains.



As for now I am preparing what the next few months will hold and what new things I will be able to try. Everyday I learn something new, from language, culture, history, or even about myself and what I am capable to do. But for now I will say see you later and I can't wait to share what the rest of my exchange will have to offer.

さようなら (Sayonara)

*Katy*